



## PEACE OF MIND

'Peace of Mind' is a unique program that has been developed by the Israel Center for the Treatment of Psychotrauma. It provides a bridge and pathway back to civilian life for young men and women who have served for 3 or more years in high risk combat units in the Israel Defense Forces

***"I now realize that my life has changed twice in the past sixteen months, once it changed during the second Lebanon war but I wasn't aware of it, because I thought it was normal to be constantly tense. The second time my life changed was during the ICTP workshop where I gained perspective of how to cope and to continue with the rest of my life."***

Above are the reflections of a paramedic in the rescue unit of the Israeli Air Force, after she participated in 2007 in one of the first 'Peace of Mind' workshops developed by the Israel Center for the Treatment of Psychotrauma (ICTP) of Herzog Hospital.



## The Need

Every year, thousands of Israeli combat soldiers in their twenties are discharged from military service and are returned to civilian life. Despite their lengthy and arduous physical training, scant attention is paid to their psychological preparedness to cope with the aftermath of their traumatic experiences. Many witnessed terrible sights, made split-second life and death decisions, or experienced the loss of a comrade and the ensuing grief and bereavement that followed.

Most combat soldiers display remarkable emotional resilience in the face of traumatic situations. However, when discharged from the army, after three years or more spent in a strict military framework, many feel overwhelmed by the decisions and demands of civilian life. They may develop symptoms ranging from difficulties with concentration and sleep as well as memory disorders. Other manifestations include substance abuse, anger management, and symptoms which can lead to full-blown Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

## The Solution: 'Peace of Mind' for Combat Soldiers

The 'Peace of Mind' intervention by ICTP, strengthens the emotional resilience of discharged combat soldiers. It also identifies those who may be grappling with severe psychotrauma and ensures that they receive the treatment they need and deserve. 'Peace of Mind' enables Israeli combat soldiers who have contributed at least three of their most formative years serving their country to embark upon productive civilian lives.



Over Fifty 'Peace of Mind' groups drawn from units that fought in the Second Lebanon War, Operation Cast Lead and other combat actions have completed their therapy course in the program. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, with participants reporting a renewed sense of optimism, self-control and an ability to grow from their experiences.

In the coming years, together with many synagogue communities in Europe and North America, ICTP hopes to provide this intervention for many additional groups of discharged soldiers.

## Project Description

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) are working with ICTP, identifying combat units that are completing their terms of duty and could gain most from the 'Peace of Mind' program. Our model is to bring together soldiers who have been serving in the same unit or team, so that an esprit de corps and a level of trust already exists, thus facilitating the serious work they need to accomplish in a relatively short period of time.



Two ICTP therapists work with each group. The process begins with a two day preparatory workshop presenting the program to the participants and opening a new channel of communication within the group. At a later date, the participants enjoy a seven day

program overseas combining therapeutic group experiences with leisure activities while hosted by a local Jewish community. To date previous groups have been hosted in Holland, Italy, England, France, Canada and the United States. A follow up program takes place six weeks later and consists of a full day of therapeutic work. The final follow up meeting is held six months later, making the full program nine months long. ICTP stays in long term contact with all participants. Additional therapeutic services are given to those in need.

## Evaluation

The entire intervention is evaluated with pre, post and follow-up questionnaires to assess its impact on the levels of distress, attitudes, emotional resilience, and well-being of the participating soldiers.



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